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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000332

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/RSA, AND AF/E

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TAGS: KPKO MARR PGOV PREL AU

SUBJECT: AU SUMMIT -- S/A WOLPE ENGAGES EAST AFRICAN  
COMMUNITY ON BURUNDI ELECTIONS

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 200

1B. ADDIS ABABA 201

1C. ADDIS ABABA 280

Classified By: USAU Ambassador Michael A. Battle, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This message is from USAU Ambassador Michael A. Battle.

11. (U) January 30, 2010; 2:45 p.m.; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

12. (U) Participants:

U.S.

Special Advisor Howard Wolpe

Deputy Special Advisor Jim Yellin

USAU Military Advisor Ellington (notetaker)

East African Community Secretariat

Deputy Secretary General Beatrice Kiraso

Principal International Relations Officer Joseph Clifford

Birungi

13. (SBU) Summary. On the margins of the African Union (AU) Summit in Addis Ababa, U.S. Special Advisor for the Great Lakes Region Howard Wolpe and East African Community (EAC) Deputy Secretary General Beatrice Kiraso shared concerns about the lack of international oversight of Burundi's peace process and agreed on the need to establish a facilitation mechanism should things go awry in Burundi's elections process. Kiraso briefed Wolpe on the findings of a recent EAC electoral support mission to Burundi, as well as the consternation caused by its draft report. Wolpe agreed to raise the report with Nkurunziza, Museveni, and Kikwete. If Nkurunziza endorses the report and requests international election monitors, the EAC says it is prepared to send observers, although perhaps not in the numbers necessary to cover Burundi's 12,000 polling stations. End Summary.

14. (SBU) In a January 30 meeting with EAC Deputy Secretary General Beatrice Kiraso on the margins of the AU Summit in Addis Ababa, U.S. Special Advisor for the Great Lakes Region Howard Wolpe raised concerns about the lack of international oversight of the peace process in the wake of the dismissal of Head of United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) Youssef Mahmoud and the withdrawal of the South African protection mission. Wolpe also reviewed post-conflict resolution activities previously undertaken in Burundi, and sought EAC's assistance in providing long-term election monitors for Burundi's upcoming elections, as well as the establishment of an international facilitation mechanism should the need arise

for intervention during the election period.

¶15. (SBU) Kiraso shared Wolpe's concerns about the lack of international oversight of the peace process and the need for a facilitation mechanism. She briefed Wolpe on the EAC's recent electoral support mission to Burundi, which included chairpersons, commissioners, and technical experts from the electoral commissions of EAC member countries. The support mission examined Burundi's electoral law, met with civil society organizations, and engaged relevant GOB ministries and the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI).

¶16. (SBU) Per Kiraso, the electoral support mission found that Burundi's CENI has the confidence of the population, but is lacking the capacity to coordinate all election observer activities. Other challenges noted in the EAC's findings are: the fact that the GOB has apparently not budgeted for the elections; insufficient arrangements for voting by Burundians in the Diaspora; the dearth of regulatory mechanisms governing roles in elections of security forces, electoral officials, media, and observers; the timeframe for the announcement of election results not being prescribed; lagging voter registration and national identity card issues; insufficient civic education; and inadequate provisions for assisting illiterate and disabled voters. Kiraso also noted that Burundi's custom of holding a series of elections over several months complicates matters logistically and risks voter fatigue.

¶17. (SBU) Kiraso reported that the EAC is tentatively planning to send a team of six to eight eminent persons to Burundi as

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long-term observers beginning in February 2010. In the second phase of election monitoring, the EAC proposes to send two observers to each province one month before Burundi's May elections. Finally, in the week before the elections, the EAC would augment the two-person provincial observers to a full monitoring team. Wolpe expressed satisfaction with the EAC's responsiveness to President Nkurunziza's unprecedented request for long-term observers, but reminded Kiraso that Burundi's polling stations would increase from 6,000 to roughly 12,000 nationwide, necessitating more observers than the EAC seems ready to deploy.

¶18. (C) Kiraso, who led the EAC mission, noted with disappointment the electoral support mission's report had not yet been published. She reported that the November Council of Ministers insisted that the EAC's report be endorsed by the Burundian government before publication. Tanzania, she confided, was the most opposed to publishing the report, even questioning the authority for EAC's electoral support mission. She opined that Tanzania is concerned that the EAC is moving too fast towards regional integration. Uganda may also be nervous that a similar monitoring process might be used in its 2011 elections, said Kiraso. Wolpe promised to raise the EAC's draft report with Presidents Nkurunziza, Museveni, and Kikwete (Reftels).

¶19. (U) The next EAC Council of Ministers Meeting is scheduled for March 22, reported Kiraso. In the meantime, the EAC Secretary intends to travel to Bujumbura (26-27 February) to smooth any feathers the electoral support mission might have ruffled.

¶10. (SBU) Comment. Kiraso seemed disappointed with the Council of Ministers apparent lack of interest in monitoring elections, encouraging transparency, and consolidating democracy in the region. However, at the secretariat level, the EAC remains zealous in its pursuit of regional integration, and Kiraso will continue to push for international election monitors in Burundi. Kiraso is keenly aware that the outcome of Burundi's elections, whether positive or negative, will have regional ramifications. "The interest of the EAC is to ensure that peace and stability return permanently to the Republic of Burundi, otherwise

there will be a spill-over effect on the rest of the region."

¶11. (SBU) Comment continued. In a subsequent meeting, Nkurunziza appeared amenable to Wolpe's suggestion that the GOB formally endorse the findings of the EAC so that the report could be finalized and used as a basis for international election monitoring. Wolpe also recommended that Nkurunziza request in writing that the EAC provide international election observers. Nkurunziza agreed. Nkurunziza also appeared receptive to Wolpe's suggestion that the EAC partner with Burundi to provide a facilitation mechanism should the need arise for intervention during the election period.

¶12. (SBU) Note: Kiraso reported that the EAC's MOU on defense will be upgraded to a protocol at a meeting in Kampala before the end of February.

¶13. (U) Special Advisor Wolpe has not cleared this cable.  
YATES